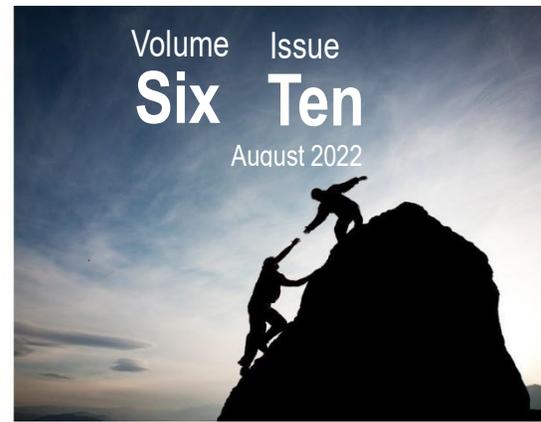


food for thought >>>

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:33



Proverbs 27:17 As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another

The Growth Journal



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From You to You

We have dedicated a couple of pages in this month's magazine to the wonderful minds that are incarcerated and have something good to share with those of you they share bunks, meals, games, jobs, and struggles with.

We are highlighting stories, poems, artwork, and words of encouragement from a few of you that put pen to paper in hopes of inspiring others. We want to show everyone there are good people who have positive things to say right there behind the very walls that divide you from the rest of the world.

This is only a small sampling of people who have gifts, talents, and experience the world can benefit from. I call them "Hidden Treasures". We hope you not only enjoy what they share, but you are inspired to share some of your literary and artistic skills with us as well.

Lonnie Johnson

When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.

Paulo Coelho



Last month's article on angels naturally leads us to consider Satan and demons. Since they are evil angels who once were like the good angels but who sinned and lost their privilege of serving God. Like good angels, they are created spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies. Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world.

The Bible, the inerrant, infallible Word of God, teaches the existence of Satan who is the originator of sin and the king over a host of fallen angels and spirits who carry out his work. The scriptures clearly indicate that in the universe and more particularly surrounding this planet earth, there is a kingdom of darkness. It is the very antithesis of the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of light. The contrast between God's Kingdom and Satan's kingdom:

Satan's kingdom	God's Kingdom
A kingdom of Darkness	A Kingdom of Light
A kingdom of Sin and Unrighteousness	A Kingdom of Holiness and Righteousness
A kingdom of sickness and disease	A Kingdom of Health and Healing
A kingdom of Deception	A Kingdom of Truth
A kingdom of Sorrow and Death	A Kingdom of Joy and Life

"Satan" is the personal name of the head of the demons. He is also called "the devil", "Beelzebub (Beelzebul, Baalzebub)", "the ruler of this world", "the prince of the power of the air" or "the evil one".

The Bible reveals several things about the ruler of the kingdom of darkness:
He is and has a definite personality, not just an evil influence. He personifies all that is evil.
He was originally, beautifully, and perfectly created by God (Ezekiel 28:12-15)
He did not abide in the truth and became a liar and a murderer (John 8:44)
He is the original sinner. (Ezekiel 28:15,16,18)
He will eventually be destroyed by fire (Ezekiel28:18)

Satan though created perfect by God (Ezek. 28:13-15), it was conceit or pride that rose in his heart because of his beauty and high position. This led to his arrogant aspirations and his sin and fall. The five "I wills" come from the proud and boastful heart of Satan and describe the nature of his aspiration (Isa. 14:13-14). In each of the "I wills" Satan set in opposition his will against the will of God.

I will ascend to heaven. There are three different domains of heaven used in Scripture: the atmospheric heaven around the earth, the celestial heavens, and the heaven of heavens, which represents God's throne or the seat of God's sovereign authority.

I will raise my throne above the stars of God. This likely refers to Satan's desire to exalt himself to rule over the angelic kingdom as God.

I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the recesses of the north. This describes Satan's ambition to control all the affairs of the entire created universe.

The Doctrine of Satan and Demonology cont.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. Satan was saying, “I will acquire a greater glory than belongs even to God Himself.”

I will make myself like the Most High. What a contradiction, to become like God was to admit that he was not God. He was only a created being.

Satan aspired to be as powerful as God. His sin was a straightforward challenge to the power and authority of God.

The schemes of Satan and his demons are to use lies, deception, murder, accusation, affliction, death, and any kind of destructive endeavor to attempt to cause people to turn away from the Lord God and destroy themselves. However, demons are limited by God's control and have limited power. And we must not think that demons can know the future or that they can read minds or know our thoughts. Only the omniscient (all-knowing) Lord God can know the future.

Under Satan's control are numerous evil spirit beings. The titles that scripture gives them imply different ranks and levels of authority. They include angels, authorities, principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, wicked spirits, and demons. (1 Pet 3:22; Eph 6:12; Mark 5:18)

Satan throughout the Scriptures is the greatest enemy of God and mankind. And for far too long Satan has been a subject of laughter instead of fear. Most of the world today pictures the devil as a comical, mythical two-horned, fork-tailed impish creature, dressed in red flannel underwear. How blind can we be?

Why should we study the doctrine of Satan and Demonology? Even though we need to meditate on the riches in glory of Christ Jesus rather than on Satan and the demons, we do need to know this doctrine of the Bible so that we might be watchful of who and what he is. We must remember that, unlike God, Satan and demon spirits have absolutely no regard for a person's honor, free will, or life. They will take any opportunity they can to attack and assault our life. Unfortunately, because many people are ignorant of his nature and schemes, they become sitting ducks for his attacks. Satan will show many faces, schemes, and methods and they aren't always obvious or unpleasant. He and his demons may appear beautiful, educated, polite, and helpful. But it's all a dangerous fraud intended to deceive, defeat, and destroy.

But we must always keep this in mind, Satan was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Satan and his demons do not have any legal authority over us. The Bible tells us that the judgment of evil spirits matches that of Satan and ends at the same time. God will ultimately cast Satan and his demons into the Lake of Fire.



“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:11-13



Have you ever gotten an artificial Christmas tree and saved the box thinking you want to use the original packaging to store it once the season is over? You take the tree out of the box and place it on display in just the right spot for the season. Once the season is over, you take the time to remove all the ornaments and other decorations before neatly placing it back in the original box for storage for another year.



When you go to place the tree back in the box, it doesn't go back in the way it was packaged from the manufacture. You fight it, forcing it back into the original box, trying not to rip the box, praying you will be able to close the box with some success. As you try to get the tree back in, there is resistance. Potential exists with the force or pressure being put on the box; it will fail to hold. It may hold temporarily, however, the more times the tree is taken out and forced back again, the less likely it will sustain over time.

The same thing happens in daily interactions, regardless of if they are related to business or personal matters. When a person exerts their will on another, without collaboration and understanding on both parts, the other person loses free will in the decision-making process. When action is taken without free will, resentment and rebellion are two possible outcomes for the future. Insecurity on behalf of the person exerting their will may ensue, causing further issues or resistance.

Each day we are given an opportunity to make a difference in our own lives and in others. We can work collaboratively with others in determining the best decision moving forward or we can assert our desires and persuade the decision of others. If we are on the end of feeling the pressure or someone else's will, remember the verse below.

John 7:17 – “If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.”

Sometimes we are tempted to influence what others decide, thinking our way is the only right way based on fear or experience with decisions made by those in our past. The past informs and influences how we act and interact with others, including what behavior is acceptable in our mind, not taking the other person's perspective into consideration. The next time we are tempted to influence someone else based on fear, consider reflecting on the following scripture.

1 Corinthians 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

God give us wisdom if we stop and listen to our surroundings. A person may call and something they have going on in their lives we relate to and imagine what they are saying pertains to us. An advertisement may spur a thought we never imagined. The more we rely on God's direction and less on our own desires and will, the more we will experience greater peace and not feel the desire to force or influence others.

2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but all should reach repentance.”

Until we surrender our thoughts, feelings, expectations and fears to God, our minds will focus on disappointment that things are not happening as quickly as we want. If we try to force things to happen in our timeframe, without relying on God's will, whatever we are trying to forge forward with will fail.

When times are tough and we start to let worldly influences creep into our thoughts; causing fear, stress, depression, or anxiety, and pushing us to behaviors that we know are not healthy, remember what 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeing someone to devour.” I don't know about you but getting devoured by a lion doesn't seem pleasant!

It takes a clear head and conscience to fight the good fight against the devil. We need to be alert and know our shield, the grace of God, is always an arm's distance away. It takes a quick moment to throw up a prayer, open the bible and read, listen to spiritual music or search for a biblical-based devotion. The great thing is you don't have to make an appointment with God. He is all around us and available whenever we need him.

My prayer is this article speaks to you and causes consideration for future interactions with those around you. May God keep you and protect you through the storms of life.

Here is a piece of artwork by one of our Growth Ministries family that is currently housed by KDOC. It depicts our Lord and Savior as he took on all our sins.



Advanced Technology

Technology is so advanced that it is so much easier to catch criminals than it was a century ago. There are television shows such as *First 48*, *ID Channel*, *Drug Inc*, *Locked Up Abroad*, *America's Dumbest Criminals*, *Forensic Files*, and *Undercover-Underage*.

As seen in many movies and shows are these tools of technology; cameras on buildings, stop lights, teddy bears, DNA, fingerprints, saliva, footprints, semen, hair, etc. as well as face recognition in the news (Amber Alert, America's Most Wanted), the checking of last phone calls, recording wires taped on chests, also X-rays, MRI's, and CAT Scans to see the causes of death.

Personal Eyewitnesses- from the testimonies of neighbors, friends, families, and co-workers have always worked since the beginning of time and still work today.

Spiritual Significance-what happens in the dark comes to the light. Your sins will find you out. God sees all things and will judge us according to our works: every secret thing good or evil.

In conclusion, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

***By Simone A.,
Lansing Correctional Facility***

The Seat

There is a seat, that we will all see
Bearing two names "Grace and Mercy"
We get to choose which we will receive
One for the haughty, one for the meek
We only get mercies if Christ bears our wrath
We only get grace if Christ pays our debt...so..
Please come, come now to the seat
To kneel at his feet and beg for His mercies
Please don't, get to the end
And stand to defend, yourself from His judgements

There is a throne, where we will all be
The books will be opened, what will you plea
Will you confess sin or plead not guilty
Choose life or death eternally
We only get freedom if Christ advocates
We only get pardoned if Christ takes our place...so
Please come, come now to the seat
To kneel at his feet and beg Him for mercies
Please don't get to the end
And stand to defend, yourself from His judgements

He is just and pure, He's righteous and Holy
We are not, so we fear, we are weak and unworthy
But He is not, so we cheer, and we shout of His Glory
The Lamb Who was slain, our redemption story...so
I come, come now to the seat
To kneel at your feet, and beg for your mercies
I won't, I won't get to the end
And stand to defend, myself from your judgements
You give help in my time of need
You're my High Priest, I pray boldly through You

***By Anthony E.,
Norton Correctional Facility***

We Can't Get That "QUARTER BACK!"

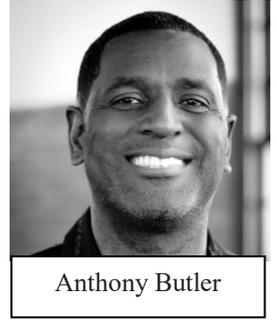
By Anthony J. Butler: Founder | CEO of The VIP Movement | Multigenerational Speaker | Author | Educational

MY Mind...Orders my steps to the right, to the left

MY Mouth...Speaks life, speaks death

MY Movements...will be full of improvements

MY Gifts will be used to uplift



Thank you Jesus for a daily....renewed mind full of vision, mission, and...TRANSITION!

I often say when I speak, "We can't get that "QUARTER-BACK!" I measure my personal and professional progress on an ongoing basis. However, on March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 (The last day of each quarter of the year), I reflect on if I have been a great steward of the time God gave me. Each quarter that passes, we will never get back again! Think about how many quarters do you have left? Each day, Each week, Each month, EACH QUARTER, each year is a blessing.

"We can't get that "QUARTER-BACK!"

MY Mind...Orders my steps to the right, to the left

MY Mouth...Speaks life, speaks death

MY Movements...will be full of improvements

MY Gifts will be used to uplift

Thank you Jesus for a daily....renewed mind full of vision, mission, and...TRANSITION... Each day, Each week, Each month, and EACH QUARTER! "We can't get that "QUARTER-BACK!"

Pray and obey each day!



For anyone that is a believer you may already see, hear, and feel the power of the Holy Spirit moving across our nation and the world at this time. It is so powerful and obvious to those that have eyes to see and ears to hear.

But what about those that don't know Jesus as their Lord and personal savior or have never heard the word of God? Well, you that have not yet heard the calling of the Lord, be ready, for it is coming! God has much in store for those that think they have no purpose, are oppressed, or confused. It states in the bible that "greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world." (1

John 4:4) That scripture means Jesus' spirit is already in you just waiting to emerge; to change your circumstances to prosperity instead of despair.

I believe the greatest revival ever seen is coming to the world in the not-so-distant future. An even more exciting thing is that He will be touching the broken-hearted, the prisoners, the addicts and the ones who have NEVER heard what it means to be saved. Those are the ones that God is calling to the table for such a time as this. Why? Because many Christians have become lukewarm in their commitment to Jesus. That is not to say they are not saved because they are. What I am saying is that God is calling on the "least of these", (Mat. 25:40-45) or in biblical times, the thieves, tax collectors, lepers, and prostitutes. I could continue the list, but you get the idea.

Today, God is asking you to come to His table and be a warrior for Christ. He is asking you to be the body of Christ that rises up, walks through the fire just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were thrown into the fiery furnace for their belief in the one true God. They would not bend the knee to the king as asked. They would not worship him in any way. Instead, they told the King, "My God will deliver us no matter what happens" (Dan. 3:16-28). Because of their faith, they were not only delivered from the fire, but Jesus showed up in the midst of the flames. He protected them from fire touching them in any way. In fact, they even came out of the fire not smelling like smoke! As a result, the king declared that there is only one God for he saw the fourth man too; he saw Jesus! Talk about miracles! That is the power of my Lord and savior.

He is calling you by name but it is up to you to listen and say yes. Once you do, I promise that no matter what situation you may be facing, you will overcome it with the power of Jesus that now rests inside you. You may not be able to see Him with your natural eyes, but I can tell you from experience that you will feel His presence every day no matter what you face. If the Holy Spirit of Jesus moves you right now as you read this to become a fearless warrior for Jesus Christ, then join the greatest movement of all time. Be redeemed by His blood and get ready for EVERYTHING to change. Remember, we are called to be co-laborers with Christ. That means you must place yourself in a position not only to receive Jesus but do your part to learn the Word of God. I guarantee whatever you put in "from your heart" will reap a much greater harvest than you give to God. Why? Because God is a God of more than enough! He wants nothing more than for you to experience abundant joy, blessing, prosperity, and love.

So, join me now in the sinner's prayer and give your heart to God. Fight with me against the powers of darkness that do nothing but steal, kill and destroy our lives.

"Lord, I know that I have sinned and need your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ died for me and rose from the dead. I invite you into my life to be my Lord and Savior. In Jesus name, Amen!" Welcome to the **BEST** club ever!

Words to Grow By

By Linda Lewis

The OTHER Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the **Serenity**

To stop beating up myself for not doing things perfectly,

The **Courage** to forgive myself because I'm doing better,

And the **Wisdom**, Your Wisdom,

to know that You already love Me just the way I am.

And help me to always remember your Word in Deuteronomy 31:6

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you".

Amen

Women Empowering Women By

By Linda Lewis

Wonderful

Optimistic

Marvelous

Amazing

Noble

That is who **YOU** are!

YOU might not have it all together,

But have peace knowing **YOU** are God's Treasure.

YOU ARE

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made!

Psalms 139:14

SUMMER WORD SEARCH

W U D C E U O Q L C W H P F T D S M J U
 B T J C K Z Q H P V L E Y R N P R A Z T
 T E J R E M M U S I T V D P O Z E J I M
 L B A K H M E D M P R V H L K Q L N I S
 T E V C B V O N O G P T F K D S K A C S
 M W F H H Q K S O V N P D J N V N G E L
 H Y G N I P M A C L I I K A I G I Q C B
 X R U X W S R N Y L E U M C O L R B R N
 S G A F F B H D F R L M R M Q R P M E W
 T W F I B U O C P H I B R N I U S G A I
 L I N S A J T A C A P D T E A W F Z M E
 E D E H S L D S R O R D B Q T E S N R L
 M M B I E W Q T O K S K V B K A C L Z C
 O H S N B T R L U G W A O A X L W O V I
 N W B G A P A E C S C P J R P Q I S Y S
 A B F Y L F L H M A X Y T B W U J G P P
 D M G T L M I B T Y K U S E B Y C I E O
 E W T I U S M I W S H A Y C R Z T N C P
 O F J S W D O M S S B C C U P H N A D K
 R R M W U N X X W Q V A E E D K L I I B



Barbecue
Baseball
Beach
Camping
Fishing



Flip Flops
Ice Cream
Lemonade
Ocean
Park



Pool
Popsicle
Road Trip
sandcastle
sprinklers



Summer
swimming
swimsuit
vacation
Watermelon

God Loves You No Matter What!

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Lonnie Johnson
GMI Executive Director

Everyone wants to be loved. It is part of our human nature. Unfortunately, life has a way of distorting what love should be like. As we move through life we get disappointed, abused, lied to, and neglected by people we feel are supposed to love us. That tends to harden our hearts for the next relationship. It can even cause us to take that out on others. We even tend to look at how God loves us through the lens of our relationships with others.

The bible speaks of four types of love. Eros referring to physical or sexual love, philos meaning warm affection or friendship, storge which means love between family members and agape which is sacrificial or unconditional love. Many times, we confuse one type of love with another. I want to talk about God's love for us. His unconditional, everlasting sacrificial, compassionate love.

God's love for us started way before we were saved. God did not start loving us when we decided to walk away from sin. Back when we were in our mess, when we were defiant about living in accordance to his will, when we willingly did what we knew was wrong, He loved us. As a matter of fact, mankind's sinfulness, and inability to stop sinning is when God demonstrated the greatest act of love. The bible says in Romans 5:8 NIV "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us". That sacrifice made by Jesus is still directed towards us today. It is there until we decide to turn our lives over. It is in the form of God's mercy.

What about after we get saved? What about when we truly know better and have no excuse for acting out of the will of God? We know that in our human experiences husbands fall out of love with wives, and wives fall out of love with husbands. Good friends fall out with one another over money or stern words. Parents disown children when they commit crimes and go to jail. So, what would make God no longer love us?

Good question Lonnie! **Nothing!** Paul spells it out in our scripture above. God inspired him to write down that **nothing can separate us from God's love**. These words came from the mind of God, through Paul to us. Paul had experienced a lot when he wrote this. He had been shipwrecked, put in jail unjustly, his life threatened, and more. He could have thought, "God must not love me...." We can look at others like Moses who committed murder; David who slept with another man's wife and had the man killed; and Abraham who lied to a King saying his wife was his sister. God still loved and used them. To sum this up, **There isn't anything that we have done, should have done, or that's been done to us that can keep God from loving us**. The very reason God steers us away from sin is because he loves us. He wants to spend eternity with us and we cannot do that if we chose to live a life of sin over living it for him. He will love us to the day we die.

So, stop allowing the devil to tell you God does not love you. Stop hiding from God when you mess up. Stop wallowing in pity when bad things happen to you. If you mess up ask for forgiveness. If something bad happens, count it all joy.


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Changing the World One Life at a Time